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[00:00:00] **Pippa:** Hello, I'm Pippa.

[00:00:20] **Kate:** And I'm Kate.

[00:00:23] **Pippa:** Welcome to a practical guide to death.

[00:00:27] **Kate:** This discussion episode. She has a conversation between writer, Leah Chillery and end of life doula and experts in fear of death, Caroline Dent.

[00:00:41] **Pippa:** They're discussing Leah's play fixing Eileen. So if you haven't already listened to that, maybe pause this now and listen to that first, so you don't hear any spoilers here

[00:00:51] **Kate:** and if you've already heard fixing Eileen, then we hope you find listening to this conversation interesting.

[00:01:15] **Leah:** Hi, I'm Leah Chillery and I wrote fixing Eileen. And I'm here today talking to Caroline. Um, hi, Caroline. Hey, did you want to introduce yourself?

[00:01:30] **Caroline:** Hi, I'm Caroline Dent. And I was invited by Kate to, to talk, um, about Santa to phobia, which is what Leah's play is all about. I suffered from Fanta to phobia for a large part of my life.

[00:01:49] Um, so my life became an exploration into death and dying really, and, and what it all means. Um, I run death cafe. And I'm an then trained as an end of life doula now. And I also recently started running thunder to phobia cafes, which are just talking spaces, similar to death cafes in which people can come and share their thoughts and their feelings around death and dying.

[00:02:19] **Leah:** And previous to us being introduced. I didn't even know that there was a phobia, um, for fear of death. Even though I have suffered from it myself, um, are basically a childhood OCD, which kind of morphed into an addictive kind of obsessive personality. Um, I'm very all or nothing. Um, as I've got older, I've managed to be able to channel that in positive ways, like exercise and work and research and things like that.

[00:02:51] Um, but when I was younger, you know, as you can imagine drinking and that sort of thing, um, it can very much. Left field. Um, but yeah, so when I've kind of tried to get to the bottom of my own obsessive personality, um, and I've gone back to when I had childhood OCD, because I thought that must be, must've been a starting point.

[00:03:13] I kind of figured out that my childhood OCD stemmed from fear of my mother dying. Um, and then as I've sort of peeled back the layers. Over the years, I've discovered that it was actually fear of myself dying. It was fear of death. Um, so it's interesting that there's actually a name for that. Um, and it's also interesting to think of other people with OCD, if that is the root of their own, um, condition as well.

[00:03:42] I don't, I don't know what you think.

[00:03:45] **Caroline:** Yeah, I can, uh, I, I didn't realize that the wa th th this death anxiety thing had a name for many, many years, actually. In fact, when I, when it was really bad in my twenties, I used to refer to it as my demon. Um, which kind of shows you how much shame there is around phobias in general?

[00:04:06] You know, I couldn't even really say what it was. It was like it was my demons. It was personal to me as opposed to a recognize, um, phobia. Um, it's interesting because there is a relationship between. Oh, C OCD and funner to phobia. Now I've been reading a little bit about that and I think there have been studies, um, that point to that now, um, the link between those two things and, um, you know, a lot of research now is pointing to Thelma, to phobia being the root of many, many.

[00:04:42] Phobias. Um, so looking back, I can see as a child I had, because for me it started very early as a sort of existential angst, you know, about one day I'm not going to exist. Um, and the sheer terror that accompanied that as a child, trying to understand something that is completely incomprehensible. Right.

[00:05:03] And, um, You know what ha I mean, I, and so I realized recently that I have many, many phobias that actually up their route would I think anxiety, I was frightened, afraid of dogs. Although I grew up with dogs, but other dogs, I was scared of the unknown dogs. I was scared of the dark. I was scared of ghosts. I was scared.

[00:05:24] I have claustrophobia. Um, so many different fears, you know, hell unhealth, anxiety being the prime one, which really. Uh, arose in my twenties. And I think a lot of people with health anxiety actually have found to phobia. I

was forever going to the doctor with, or I've got this little blemish here. This doesn't feel right.

[00:05:47] I've got tingling in my fingers. You know, a lot of things that were actually symptoms of anxiety, um, in the body, um, And when I listened to your play, I found it quite, I was quite surprised really. When you started talking about your fear of your mother dying, because I had that in spades when I was growing up and, uh, following, listening to your, uh, Podcasts.

[00:06:15] I spoke to my younger sister about this and she revealed to me, and this is the first time I've ever heard that. She said she had the same thing as a child. We were terrified of our mother dying. We would lie awake at night. She's not home. She's not home. She's not home. When is she coming home? What's happened to her.

[00:06:34] Um, And there were reasons for that because my mother was quite depressed and she did actually make some suicide attempts later on. Um, you know, that my home life wasn't very happy, but, uh, actually you introducing this, uh, was just, wow. You know, so somebody else, it, it came from the same origin and there's nothing like confirmation is that really?

[00:06:59] And

[00:07:00] **Leah:** I wonder if everybody has it. Deep deep down, because it's something that we don't really talk about, you know, or face up to. And, um, when I started out researching death, um, after being approached to write this, but my first response. I'm going to write a comedy. It's going to be about a woman planning around funeral.

[00:07:24] She's going to be swinging from the monorail in the few, you know, in the chapel when she dies. And my, my own like response was humor, um, which is how I kind of deal with that sort of thing. Um, but then once I actually S you know, said, Kwon, let's get real, let's do some research. Um, I started looking into death denialism and.

[00:07:50] I kind of realized like, wow, we all do it. It's like it's staring us in the face. Um, and we've all kind of buried it. So when I started researching all of this, um, I came to realize that like, we are the only living species, which is aware of their own mortality. And, um, and that is just a massive burden. To carry that all animals, I think fear of death in itself is normal.

[00:08:24] You know, animals shy away from pain. They want to, um, survive. That is their purpose. Um, you know, even a, either, you know, if you go to, it will run, that's normal to try and preserve your own, you know, survival, but what's not quite normal in nature. It seems is knowing that. You're going to die and that is a massive burden to carry.

[00:08:49] And I don't know if we've necessarily, um, learned how to, how to cope with it. Um, and that's where the research then led me down a path of many Ted talks, but one in particular by a guy called Stephen cave who, um, was talking about death denialism, which I just found fascinating. And he was talking about these four different, um, Pillars of ways, which humans try to avoid death.

[00:09:20] Um, and the first one was staying alive. So basically trying to live forever and there are scientists right now, you know, um, anti-Asian and all that, um, trying to find ways to make us live forever. There's people who've already been frozen, you know, to try and be. Defrosted later on when we've got the technology, when we know what we're doing.

[00:09:43] Um, and then the second one was resurrection. You know, that's quite a religious one, isn't it? Where, you know, Christ is going to come again and take everybody that's already died out the, for grinding, we're all gonna live forever. Um, awesome. And then the other one, which I think I'm still kind of a little bit, my feet are in this camp, um, is that we are the soul and our soul lives forever.

[00:10:04] We might not be here physically, but you know, we might. Off joining, you know, a greater part of this somewhere to do all of these wonderful mystical things. Um, and then the last one, which I think kind of socks is, um, legacy, which means, you know, you won't carry on, but maybe your name could, you could be in the history books or whatever.

[00:10:23] Um, I don't find it that one, um, don't seem satisfied enough to me that one. Um, but yeah, that's, that's the other way. And, um, and if you, if you like. At humanity. It's like, they are the ways which we deal with, which, you know, it's how we coping with this burden and not very well, I don't think it's necessarily working.

[00:10:46] Um, but yeah. And then I started thinking about, well, how could we, how can we carry this burden? You know, is it about. Trying to teach children, um, is there a better way to help those little children like me and you? When we

were, you know, lying on our beds, worrying about our mothers and worrying about not existing anymore and things like that.

[00:11:09] Is there a way, is there something which could have helped us in, in some way?

[00:11:19] **Caroline:** Yes. Yes. I've heard a bit about death denial, um, and terror management theories and how we kind of protect ourselves against these fears. Um, one thing that struck me at the moment is this cult of celebrity. And, you know, for me, that's a really big example of death denialism, you know, it's like we can all be on telly if we can all, you know, big influencers, you know, and have this massive effect.

[00:11:46] You know, I wonder how much death denial is at the heart of the cult of celebrity really well that,

[00:11:53] **Leah:** um, live in forever. You know, the fact that song, isn't it. Fame. I want to live forever. Yeah, I remember my

[00:11:59] **Caroline:** name is Lexi. Yeah. So I think fear of death is normal. I think it's an evolutionary tool which helps us to survive, you know, by not, you know, doing, you know, putting our hand in the fire or, you know, jumping into deep water when we can't swim this kind of thing.

[00:12:16] But I think. It's really how much it affects your life. It's affecting your life very negatively and making decisions for you. So if you're making decisions based on fear of death, you know, then you've got Santa to phobia. For me. COVID has, has, uh, brought. Catastrophic thinking. I think, I think my, I think I had catastrophic thinking as a child because of my, my home life, you know, where it was very kind of unsafe, really, you know, never knowing what was gonna kick off in my, in my house.

[00:12:53] Um, and I guess, uh, you know, I started reading about death at 20. I noticed with a lot of family, people are started to phobic. They using distraction techniques. Um, people will advisable or medication or medication has its place. For sure. I'm not denying that. But, uh, you know, a lot of people say, well, go look at a nice movie and that has its place too, but you can't live for you.

[00:13:20] You can't solve this problem. Continual distraction. I mean, I use, you know, I have to use, sometimes it ha has a very valuable place, but you are, for me, it was like I had to make myself my mind, most interesting project. I

have to become a detective in my own life. I have to examine everything I have to pick apart. my belief systems

[00:13:47] **Leah:** that ended up being. The jump off point for fixing Eileen, because I then kind of married the idea of this comedy. You know, this woman who's going to plan her own funeral. Um, and the idea of death denialism. Um, I think once I realized that OCD, um, uh, its root was. Fear of dying and then how I've coped with that over the years, and then also on peeled it and then made peace with it.

[00:14:19] That became sort of my journey for Eileen. Um, so a little bit, you know, this fiction it's exaggerated, but, um, it's also very much in a nutshell because my journey has been, you know, epic, you know, um, It's like you say, it's, it's work, it's hard work, um, being your own detective and your own life and fixing your own issues.

[00:14:47] And then it's like, once you get to sorry for the spoilers for anybody that's currently, you know, um, on wrapping this parcel this past of the past. But when you get to the root of it, when you get to the center, the gift it's, you're going to die one day, you know, that's, that's what it was. But then coming to terms with that means then you can live without this fear.

[00:15:14] Um, no, that's not right. She's still gonna have the fear and you need it because you don't just want to walk out in front of busy traffic, you know? Um, but it's not letting that fear run your life, as you said. Um, and I, I think that was the difference as well with. Before, when I used to let my addictions run the show.

[00:15:35] So whatever I fancy doing, whether it was online gaming or something, um, when I should be working, it was, that was done out of fear that was done out of, um, distraction. Whereas when I'd kind of made peace with my own mortality, I can now channel this energy wherever I want, because it's not out of fear.

[00:15:58] I'm not doing it to. Um, because I'm afraid of this big boogie mountain, which I've hidden in, you know, in the closet, because I know there's no boogeyman. Um, I know what it is. Uh, yeah, so it's made, even though I'm I still are me and I still are. I'm that all or nothing person. Um, it's not driven out of fear now.

[00:16:23] Um, and that's what the work is done.

[00:16:27] **Caroline:** Um, I made a decision. Um, quite a long time ago, actually that I would not make decisions based on fear. And it's a hard thing to do because fear is such a powerful motivator. And we live in very fearful times at the moment. Um, but I guess it's developing the self-awareness really isn't it to know where, where, what is making the decision for you and sort of tapping into that and saying.

[00:16:59] You know, this is fear speaking. Now, am I going to, am I going to fall? I'm just pausing allowing instead of this knee jerk reaction, which kind of what happens when you've got addictions. I mean, I have an addictive personality myself, you know, it's kind of like. I just throw myself into things, you know, and kind of, you don't do it to the max, do it to the max, really, whatever, whatever it is, you know, but, um, yeah, with developings I think, well, I think everybody needs to develop more self-awareness I think, you know, it's very easy just to, to not question why you're doing things.

[00:17:41] Um, and in a way, you know, because. I suppose because death, I mean, when you're talking about death, what we're talking about, the biggest questions, these are the biggest questions that anybody ever asks. You know, there's such huge, huge issues. Um, That. I mean, it's kind of, it's very growthful to go on. I think that's the gift is very growthful to go on the journey.

[00:18:08] I mean, like, I like you, I notice how many things that you looked at different therapists or this the same for me. I've gone on the metaphysical journey. I've gone on the therapy journey. I've gone on the. Body work, I think is very interesting because to deal with anxiety, you have to look at the body because anxiety manifests in the body, um, how neural pathways, how you know, which people, anybody who's done, CBT will know all about.

[00:18:38] You know, you have to look at how your thoughts, your sensations and your behaviors all connect up. And I mean, it's profound really. I mean, You know, I have to say to people who are talented phobic, you know, you are on the hero's journey. If you put new it, you know, you know, we have to have courage on, have a lot of courage on this journey. Read very, very hard journey. The

[00:19:03] **Leah:** one big thing that I found for Eileen, um, the ALK Tyleen make peace was, um, competent or in a child competent that little girl, um, You know, that was terrified. Um, only to discover that she was terrified about a different thing, you know, about it being about our own mortality rather than just a mother.

[00:19:30] Um, but inner child work. I've, I've done a little bit of that myself as well. Um, that's really moving. It's such a, you know, a lovely. Competent thing to do, um, you know, to basically tell your little self that you love yourself and you act out yourself and that you, sorry, you know, for, for whatever it is that you feel that you've done, um, you know, and to give them that reassurance, which they didn't get, um, to go back to when they, you know, cause you remember what you felt like at that time, when you felt alone and.

[00:20:11] And you only had a little child brain, you know, you didn't understand, this is such a big complex thing, and you didn't understand what the little child brain, so to be able to go back with the adult brain and sort of just put it all together, um, it's, it's a lovely thing. Um, it said heroin thing, I think it can be, um, I find it quite, um, Quite tough, but it's, I think it's important to do.

[00:20:44] I think we've all got a little inner or seven way that, um, is her, uh, needs to need a cuddle, you know, needs that love that they never got, um, that's not to blame anybody's parents or anything. Cause I think everybody's just doing the best. Nobody goes to parenting school. Um, you know, and they can only give you what they, what they've been given, what they've been taught.

[00:21:07] Um, So that's not to blame anybody, but I think we've all got wounds. Haven't weighted from childhood. Um, and we've all been carrying around this massive burden. Um, and, and I've been avoiding feeling these things, you know, But I don't do. Sorry. Now it's just going to say, I do just conclude in the inner child work, even though it sounds like woo, um, is very beneficial.

[00:21:40] **Caroline:** I think it's absolutely not worth. Um, and I can relate to everything that you're saying here. Um, I, I, in, in it's funny, cause my journey was a little bit back to France. I went through the metaphysical for me. It was about proof early on the first part of my journey, like metaphysical things, consciousness.

[00:22:02] And it's only really in recent years that I've gone to focus more on the roots of why. Um, why this happened to me and, um, and I've, I've read quite a bit about, uh, Earliest attachment and attachment theory, um, which is really beautiful actually. Um, I remember reading an article, which I almost cried when I read it.

[00:22:28] Somebody sent it to me and there was so much identification with what I was reading, um, about how, you know, our earliest experiences, you know, as a baby. And the, the type of attachment that, um, we experience forms

our worldview. And so if you've got really good attachment, you know, and you're well loved and you're kind of held a lot, um, you know, All these nurturing kind of the kind of things that I did for my own child and because of my own experiences, I, I suspect, um, they form your world view and you feel safe in the world.

[00:23:08] It's the world is a safe place. If you don't have those experiences. And like you say, it's not to blame anyone, you know, it may be, you know, that, you know, in the past, Mothers were told to leave their babies to cry, put them in a different room. I was told the same thing because I had a streamer and I was told to put him in another room and I didn't, you know, and it was hell it really was those first few months.

[00:23:36] But, um, This, this, uh, feeling connected. I think feeling connected is so, so important. And for me, I think I had a lot of the sense of aloneness is something that is very frightening, you know? Even the existential angst that I experienced as a very young child, one day, I'm going to die and that's it. And I'm never going to exist again.

[00:24:06] It was, it was actually more than that. It was this sense. I think a lot of the phobics have, this is that you have this image of yourself floating alone, somewhere conscious and alone, not dead. You know, that's kind of a, sort of. Misguided perception that we have, that we'll be conscious of being dad and alone.

[00:24:30] And I think the aloneness thing. Um, I wonder how many people have experienced because you can feel alone if you have a critical parent, for instance, you know, so, you know, it may be a lot of things when you're a lot of things that may happen to you in your environment when you're young are terrible things, you know, just so we're all doing the best.

[00:24:50] Like you say, That affects you and create, create these feelings of alienation and abandoned man and aloneness. I can't tell anybody. I asked myself why I didn't tell anybody. Why was I 20? Oh, why was I 20? Before I told somebody about these abject fears that I had at times, they weren't terrifying. Um, and I suspect it's because we're not allowed to be weak and we support, you know, we feel that we've got to be strong and, you know, and so going back, like you say, doing this inner child work, and then just instead of rejecting that, oh, for God's sake, you know, Oh, I can't bear that in a child and myself, look, it's just so weak, you know, crying.

[00:25:36] And that is why Cape is strong on my car. But like other people actually allowing yourself to have compassion and seeing, you know, like some, you know, I've done little kind of visual exercises where I've eaten, you know, or I've seen this little person, this fearful little person as like a little soldier saying I'll protect you or protect you.

[00:25:54] You know, I'm all scared. And then having compassion for that. Yeah, that, you know, I often use that phrase little long it's okay. Little, um, you know, just to myself, if I'm in fear of something is like I experienced fear at the moment because of the pandemic, you know, it's brought a lot of stuff up for me again.

[00:26:20] And it has to do with chaos and change and the unknown, which are all tied up with fear of death. You know, I find myself saying, oh, little one, you know, putting my hands on my heart or maybe stroke, my own arms, own little one is okay, you're doing good. You're doing good. I'm here. I'm here now. It's beautiful work. It really is beautiful work.

[00:26:47] **Leah:** And the thing is it would be so good. It was more widespread, you know, if it was something that they actually taught you to do to tell sooth, um, because probably the people who need it most aren't even aware that they need it or, you know, they would never even consider it. Um, you know, cause there's a lot of people running around with the holes inside them, you know, with wounds, big wounds that they're trying to ignore, you know, Barry and, um, And, you know, they might never get the help.

[00:27:23] **Caroline:** Yeah. They might never get it. I will say, you know, I think one of the problems is even doctors and the medical profession, even therapist. Can I find it very difficult to deal with, um, to phobia I've, I've heard this said by psychologists, you know, that they may feel quite overwhelmed with, with dealing this, dealing with this in people.

[00:27:48] And that was certainly my experience at the first two doctors that I. Approach couldn't deal with that. Um, so they would send me for medical tests, but they would never address really what was the issue. And I didn't have at that point, the confidence and because the shame always covering. Phobias is all, there's often a tendency to shame oneself.

[00:28:12] You know, I didn't have the courage to stand up for myself and in the face of, well, you should give up smoking. No wonder you think you're going to die. This was not helpful to me. And they took it actually to, uh, an amazing

doctor and I was 30 by this. Um, who was a homeopath as well as a registered NHS GA GP to actually listen and, oh my God, the, the effects.

[00:28:43] Of a power, a person, but actually listens to you fully listens to you and really hears you. It's just a radical act. It's a radical act. And that woman changed my life.

[00:28:57] **Leah:** So you're a death doula. Experience and talking to people, um, at the end of life, how is that?

[00:29:07] **Caroline:** I think it was becoming a death. Doula was a natural part of my journey really.

[00:29:13] As soon as I heard that, It was kind of, as soon as I heard that there was such a role. I knew that that was it. And that was my direction. It was around the same time that the death cafe movement started that this movement started. And it was the same with the death cafe movement. I knew this was it. You know, I, I just thought I'd recovered from Santa to phobia.

[00:29:38] By that time. Um, and obviously, you know, as part of a, uh, uh, um, a death doula's training and the death doula is like a birth doula, but at the other end of life. So we're like guides really. We're not, we're not medically, uh, trialed some, some nurses may trying to be death doulas, or some doctors may trying to be death doulas as well, but we're more, it's more about being.

[00:30:08] You know, we we've done, we do a lot of reflection work, so we deal with our own relationship with that. And I like, I liked that phrase relationship because I think everybody needs to look at that question, their relationship with it and see it as a relationship with death, not some dreadful, terrible thing that shouldn't happen to them.

[00:30:27] That is going like a. We need to build a relationship with that. Um, and so we we've built a relationship with death and so we're comfortable talking about it. And so when we go in to support someone, what kind of like a companion, and we're a guide because we understand the process of dying. It's not a mystery to us.

[00:30:51] We understand the process of dying in the same wide. Uh, both dealer understands the process of birth, so we can be a guide to that person and let them know what they, they may expect. And that, that offers a lot of reassurance because this is chaos. Um, for some people, death is chaos for some people it's, it's the great unknown, isn't it?

[00:31:13] You know, it's a journey that they don't want to go on. Um, and also because we go in as, um, blank slate, we don't have a history with that person. There's no baggage historical baggage that person can tell us things that possibly. They can't tell their relatives, you know, because people are people who are dying, especially parents very often have a tendency to be very protective towards their children.

[00:31:43] I would be the same as a mother is just like an inbuilt thing. You know, we protect our children, we put our children before ourselves. And so, you know, You know, the woman that's, you know, maybe afraid to say to her, her daughter, listen, let me go. I'm really ready to go, stop fighting, stop asking for treatments for me.

[00:32:04] You know, I need to go now and I need you to let me go. We can, that person can have those conversations with us. And then we can act as an interface as well, you know, and, and maybe broach those conversations and explain. To the family, you know, the needs of the person. And so I think it's a really, really valuable role, which isn't really there at the moment.

[00:32:30] I mean, hospice, hospice can do so much, but obviously nurses in hospice is a very busy and a lot of people don't get to spend a lot of time in hospice anymore because, because of the demand and you know, the resources that are available now, so.

[00:32:48] **Leah:** I don't think I've even been around, been with somebody who's died in person. What is that like? Have you actually been there at that, that moment?

[00:33:00] **Caroline:** I have, yeah. I mean, I haven't. Masses and masses, cause I've actually tended to do quite long journeys with people, you know, which I liked because I like getting to know the person because I like getting to know their history. I like getting to know about their lives because I feel also all people often have a lot of resolution to make at the end of life, you know?

[00:33:23] And so I like listening to those stories and affirming them, affirming their lives actually. Cause quite often old people. They tend to run themselves down, especially women, you know, they feel that they haven't, I didn't have a career. I was just a mother as if this is anything just about being a mother.

[00:33:45] Um, but, um, I mean, I had an experience of, I hadn't experienced the friend dying. A few years ago, it was a friend of myself and he knew my son very well. And my son ended up being there, his death as well. And on my son

was about 20 at that point. And he'd never seen anybody dying and. The friend, it was a very, very peaceful death.

[00:34:15] And the friend smiled just before he, as he took his last breath, he literally smiled. And then that was it. And, uh, very peaceful. And, uh, we sat with the body, my friend's body for like 20 minutes afterwards and we played some music. Um, it was. Afterwards. I said, my son said to me afterwards, he says, mom, did you see his smiled?

[00:34:44] Did you see that? And I said, yes, I did see that. And um, this, this was his only experience of ever seeing somebody die. And, um, and then a few days later we'd gone our separate ways. And I met back up with him. I said, so how are you feeling? You know, following that experience. And he said, Oh, I feel so alive.

[00:35:07] I want to do this and I want to do that. And, uh, he was just full of life and it was very interesting to see how that death had impacted him actually in the positive way. And he loved this post. He loved this person, you know, it was like a kind of grandfather to him really. I mean, luckily it was the natural order of things, you know, I'm not saying it's always like that.

[00:35:34] Obviously the young person's different, but, uh, I think that's an example of how being with somebody that being at a death can actually be a very positive. Experience, you know, and of course, so pushed over there and so medicalized, and so we're so removed from it. You know, I'm always surprised sometimes I, you know, talking to people.

[00:36:01] In my six days who actually haven't been with somebody when they were dying or haven't even seen a dead body. I mean, that's quite extraordinary. Really is not. Have you ever seen, um, a person, a dead body or?

[00:36:16] **Leah:** I have, I saw, I saw my grandma. Um, I kind of wish I hadn't after I'd seen her because she didn't look like herself, you know?

[00:36:23] Um, the spirit had gone, you know, um, She just looked like tiny little human that I didn't know. Um,

[00:36:38] but what you were saying about your son's sort of positive response? Um, I find, I find that as well. Um, you know, when I've had somebody die, um, my auntie was probably the most recent, a few years ago and determined. It just gives you that reminder, I suppose, of the mortality, which most people are avoided.

[00:37:05] And then you get a sort of a renewal of life, like possessed again, like for me, it was like my auntie, she got so many hopes and dreams and they'd gone no more time. That's it? That's it it's over. And it made me think I've got those verbs. You know, I need to get moving. So it gave me a kind of, I don't want to call it a motivation, but it was a shove, a kick up the butt, um, to get moved until I think it can be a stark reminder.

[00:37:42] Um, not the nicest of the reminders, but a little, um, wake up call. Um, and it's just a shame because we could do with. More often. Um, you know, and if we were all running around trying to avoid the facts, we might actually, you know, it's become a cliché, isn't it like that say in about live, you live your life.

[00:38:09] Like it's your last kind of thing, but it doesn't even mean anything to people anymore. They're not really seriously thinking it could be the last, you know, not in the deepest of sense. Um,

[00:38:24] **Pippa:** It's interesting.

[00:38:25] **Caroline:** When you think about people that have you do things like mountain climbing and people that do it without the ropes and like, you know, and, uh, you know, that really confronting their own mortality really, and how it makes them feel really alive. They say, you know, and I think thinking about death is a bit.

[00:38:48] It's a bit like an extreme sport, extreme psychological sport. He who does wins. Yeah.

[00:39:01] **Leah:** I wonder if there's something in that though. Cause you know, I, I like to run and it, I say it's because it makes me feel alive, you know? So maybe it is like a reminder, you know that you are alive. Yeah. Yeah. If that was. Do do certain things.

[00:39:20] **Caroline:** Some people, I mean, there are apps now, like there's one called we croak and you, it sends you reminders throughout the day that you're going to die.

[00:39:36] You know, which, uh, is quite interesting. And you know, so for us, it may be, if you're going through, you're feeling a bit Maloney about, oh God, you know, the tube is packed, it's raining. I don't want to go to work or whatever, you know, and then you get the reminder. It can actually take you out of that. And to while I'm still alive, it's not all bad.

[00:40:01] Yeah, but it goes, that's very much part of the Buddhist tradition as well as not, you know, I mean, the Buddhist seemed to have the best handle on death of any religion stroke philosophy, um, in that, um, you know, they advise a person to think about that. Every day for a few minutes. In fact, research has shown that it's actually beneficial to your mental health to spend a little bit of time each day.

[00:40:32] Um, thinking about the fact that one day you will die.

[00:40:40] **Leah:** That reminds me a little bit of, there's an entrepreneur called Gary V. Um, he's on social media, Facebook and Instagram, that sort of thing. And he does all these motivational stuff and says that he thinks about dying every day, basically to make him appreciate his life and get moving. And when I first heard him say that, A few years ago.

[00:41:04] It was that last, very negative. That's very, if you believe it's kind of into law of attraction then, and I was like, why would I think about that? I would try that, but now it's like, I see, I see why it does it. Um, you know, it's to get that, that same little motivation I was talking about without somebody having to die and thing, you know?

[00:41:26] **Caroline:** Yeah. I said, I love going into Nature charity because I think. I mean, aside from me, Nature's a great place to develop mindfulness. Um, and I think all people were found to phobia need to cultivate mindfulness and an ability to be in the present moment. Um, and I think nature's a great way if you're not a meditate and you don't know.

[00:41:51] Crossland on the floor, which I definitely don't, um, you know, going out into nature and watching the clouds and watching the birds and the whole pace. And you see the natural cycle of life growing up in the Western world, which is, you know, very strong on atheism and science and it can't be right. Cause it's not proved in other burrow tree.

[00:42:18] It's very predominant. Um, it's um, it's good to rephrase. The word as this unknown is the great unknown. We don't know. So when the pandemic happened, I've always wanted to start a thunder to phobia and event for people that fell into phobic because they need connection, they need to communicate. And it's the first thing that I will say to anybody.

[00:42:44] You need to talk to people about this. You cannot be alone with these fears because I know because. Alone with those fears for 20 years. And it's. Horrendous. Um, so when we took the death cafe online and in the death cafe, I

have two people helping me running it. And, and, and they've, they've also, um, that doulas, we have small groups, so we have maybe six P three groups of maybe six people.

[00:43:13] So I decided that there was an opportunity to make one of the groups, just for people that suffer from Santa to phobia, because. Draw globally that people in America could come. Cause I certainly wanted to find via cafe in my local area and find I probably could actually, but, um, I think as people slowly come out for clot, the founder to phobia closet, but like, I, I couldn't have done.

[00:43:41] So I started, um, including a little group in my, because these people need exposure. The conversation that is part of exposure therapy, CBT therapy, um, to conversations. Um, but they're very, very frightened to have these conversations, you know, because they S most fun to phobics suffer from panic attacks and they're very easily triggered.

[00:44:05] So I brought it into the death cafe and that worked really well. And then I decided to make it a separate event entirely. Um, and so we've been doing that. For the last year. And we have like a regular group of people that come along to it now, and they seem to seem to get. Um, find it very, very helpful. Uh, and of course it's one of the best things about Othello to phobia Kapha is that we can laugh at ourselves together.

[00:44:37] We found that two phobics tend to have very, very dark humor. I have very dark humor and. And so we can laugh at some of the strategies and the things that we do. And, uh, and only we can laugh together about that, you know, would it be okay for another person? So, uh, so I encourage anybody with Anna to phobia to tell somebody's connection communication of the first.

[00:45:08] Steps towards healing and recovery. Um, uh, so people are very welcome to come along to my family, to phobia cafe if I want.

[00:45:23] **Leah:** Awesome. So that's people who, um, uh, healed from fear of death, but also actively. In terms of fearing death and died?

[00:45:37] **Caroline:** Well, the people that come to the Santa to phobia cafe, uh, Jen, uh, hit, they are suffering they're in the midst of fatphobia all that I do allow people in have recovered from to phobia. I mean, a lot of people that recovered, they don't want to come because they've.

[00:45:54] They've done that they just want to get on with life now, you know? Um, but then I, um, I have one person that likes to come along and we're thinking of making, um, doing some more focused defense, really to address different aspects of sanity phobia. Um, but the people that are recovered that don't have fun into phobia, they come to the death cafes.

[00:46:17] And what generally happens is. People as they get, um, as they get more, um, comfortable with having conversations in the Sonata phobia cafe, they then start coming to the death cafes as well. And, uh, that's going to the next step really. And that's always a really nice thing when that happens.

[00:46:41] Okay,

[00:46:42] **Leah:** cool.

[00:46:42] Well, I'm going to come along to on, um, at some point. Um, I'm curious. I feel, I feel healed myself, um, from all the work that I've done, um, over the years. But as you know, there's still a lot to be spoken about, you know, how can we unburden people of this fear? Cause everybody's got it. I think whether they know it or not, um, So, yeah.

[00:47:08] Um, it's been lovely talking to you and great talking to you as well.

[00:47:13] **Caroline:** Yeah. I feel like we've only just scratched the surface, but, um, lots of food for thought there.

[00:47:28] **Pippa:** We hope you found this conversation as absorbing, as we did.

[00:47:33] **Kate:** Our thanks to everyone involved and our sound designer, you know, I'm strong and editor Fraser Youngson.

[00:47:39] **Pippa:** This podcast is produced by she works. The support from our commissioning partner, Nottingham Playhouse and funder arts council of England. Thank you.

[00:47:48] **Kate:** To find out more about the series and other. She wants a dog series. Follow us on social media at she wants a dog or visit our website. She wants a dog podcasts.com.

[00:48:02] **Pippa:** Don't forget to listen to all five plays in the series and look out for other series from us, including Sickbabe exploring life with invisible disabilities and the perverts podcast, a queer audio cabaret.

[00:48:15] **Kate:** And please do rate, subscribe and share. If you enjoyed these and join us again for more extraordinary explorations into a subject that affects us all: death.